

THE CATHOLIC MIRROR

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**Spiritual oasis:
Year of Prayer
a needed rest
stop on path
to jubilee**

By Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS)

-- With little fanfare, Pope Francis officially opened the Year of Prayer after Mass for the church's celebration of Sunday of the Word of God.

"Today we begin the Year of Prayer; that is, a year dedicated to rediscovering the great value and absolute need for prayer in personal life, in the life of the church and in the world," he said, after praying the Angelus with visitors in St. Peter's Square Jan. 21.

The pope called for the special year last February to help prepare Catholics worldwide for the Holy Year, which begins with the opening of the Holy Door in St. Peter's Basilica Dec. 24.

Preparing for the jubilee is not just about the huge construction projects underway throughout Rome to help welcome and facilitate the flow of an estimated 35 million pilgrims expected for the Holy Year 2025.

The year 2024 also should be about rebuilding and renewing spiritual pathways and practices so that the spiritual significance of the jubilee can "emerge more clearly, something which goes far beyond the necessary and urgent forms of structural organization," said Archbishop Rino Fisichella, pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization's section for new evangelization, which is coordinating the Holy Year.

Speaking at a news conference Jan. 23 about the Year of Prayer, the archbishop said 2024 is about preparing the groundwork so the jubilee "spiritually enriches the life of the church and of the entire people of God, becoming a concrete sign of hope."

The jubilee must be

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Happy New Year!

Vietnamese community kicks off Year of the Dragon during Lunar New Year celebration



Photos by Anne Marie Cox

At left, Father Ly Chu, pastor of St. Peter Vietnamese Catholic Community in Des Moines, joyfully celebrates Mass as the Year of the Dragon begins. The dragon represents good fortune.

Above, a man stands for a blessing for all grandparents and great grandparents.



Photos by Pete Soby

Celebrating Tet (Vietnamese for New Year) includes a lion dance. It's tradition that the lion chases away bad luck and invites good luck for the new year.

Christ Our Life announces speaker lineup

All tickets for those 23 and younger will be free

The eighth Christ Our Life Catholic Conference, coming to Wells Fargo Arena in Des Moines Sept. 28-29, has announced its lineup of world renown speakers and for the first time, youth tickets (formerly \$15 each) will be available for free.

Every other year, thousands of people gather in downtown Des Moines for a faith conference designed to help people learn and grow in their faith and be inspired to live their faith every day.

Currently, a steering committee and hundreds of parish outreach volunteers are working on plans for the event this fall.

Longtime dedicated volunteer and director of development, Joe Lane, Sr., is seeking donors

to support attendees ages 23 and younger. He'd like to offer them free admission, a value of \$15 per ticket, to encourage them to check out the gathering.

"They are, after all, the foundation, or growing the roots now for the future of our faith," he said. "I'm confident that many donors will recognize the value of this endeavor."

Cofounders and co-chairs of the Christ Our Life Catholic Conference Ellen Miller of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Indianola, and Marilyn Lane of Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines, are thrilled with the idea.

"We know the future of our faith is to catechize, support, and energize our youth. While the

conference, its world-class speakers, and the sacraments remain aimed at entire families, we've chosen to hold breakout sessions with several of the speakers whose topics will directly appeal to where they are at in their young lives," they said.

"We are pouring on even more effort to connect with youth ministers, religious education instructors, and parishes to encourage our young Catholics to participate," said Miller, who's traveling this spring across Iowa and to several neighboring states to provide information.

COL has grown from a regional gathering to an international event that will include worldwide livestreaming once again in addition to in-person attendance.

According to thousands

of testimonials over the past 14 years, many lives have been dramatically changed by the caliber of the Catholic presenters and music, the availability of the sacrament of reconciliation, and prayer opportunities including Mass, Eucharistic procession, adoration, and benediction.

Tickets will be available for in-person or livestream participation. First launched during the COVID pandemic in 2020, at the last conference in 2022, 14 countries were represented in the 700 livestream tickets sold.

The speakers' lineup includes some who are longtime favorites and others who will be making their first appearance at the conference.

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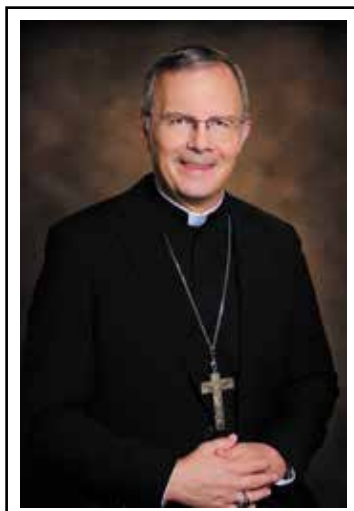
Lenten Climate Conversion

No surprise in Iowa, but we've had some weird weather this winter: blizzards and Arctic clipper temperatures for which no number of layers worn seemed sufficient, sandwiched between almost balmy days that made for some precarious choices. A few weeks ago, I drove by a manmade lake with pools of melted standing water dotting the ice, and I spied a middle age person in the very center of the lake walking a dog. Hmmm, I thought: I don't know if that's a good idea—you wouldn't find me out there testing both the ice and my guardian angel!

I was reminded of the late Polish film director Krystof Kieslowski's late 1980s film series, *The Decalogue*—specifically episode one, intended to correspond with the First Commandment: "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me." The episode opens with the atheist computer scientist Krzyztof and his young son Pawel counting their push-ups. Soon they are working a math problem together. Pawel is intrigued by the power of computers; he even wonders if his Dad's powerful computer can tell him what his mother is dreaming about.

At one point, father and son come across a dead dog in front of a church and Pawel asks his Dad, "What is death?" He receives a laconic medical description that is not satisfying. The child continues by asking about the soul and where it goes after death, to which his father replies, "All that survives us are achievements and memories."

Soon Christmas approaches. Pawel knows that his father has gotten him a new pair of ice skates, and begs him to let him have the skates early so he can



Bishop William Joensen

go ice skating on the local river. His Dad, after inputting the temperature outside, twice computes that the river can withstand three times Pawel's weight, and so he relents to his son's request.

Tragedy ensues. When a distraught neighbor comes to Krzyztof with the horrible news that his son has fallen through the ice and perished, the father remains calm, responding that "this can't be," for his calculations determined that this couldn't happen. When the eventually distraught Dad returns to his computer, as always, the screen is blinking, poised to be activated with the words, "I am ready."

In 2 Samuel 24: 2, 9-17, King David has no computer at his disposal. But he wants to know how many troops he has, and so he calls for a registration. The numbers are impressive: a total of 1.3 million men. Israel is no longer the weakest nation on the block. But David's conscience convicts him for his folly. In counting on his military might rather than the humble dependence on God that has led him in life to this point, he has in ef-

fect violated the First Commandment: "Thou shalt have no other gods before me"—especially himself, O lowly servant David. His choice among various punishments expresses his desire to restore his immediate connection with, and reliance upon, God—upon whom he casts himself in contrition and petition for himself and his people. Still, thousands of innocents suffer.

As we've embarked upon our Lenten pilgrimage, I pray it is for each of us more a time of conversion than of calculation. We do not ignore numbers in play around us in the world, especially those that speak to us of tragedy, human loss and suffering. In fact, we are called to fix our attention upon the signs of the times around us, with openness to being convicted by the fact that our ways are not God's ways. As individuals and as nations we tend to revert to reliance on our own power rather than on humbling ourselves before the Lord, in which we rely ever more upon his mercy attending his clear and penetrating judgment of our own hearts.

We are called not to keep count of our own self-validating Lenten sacrifices and commitments to the self-sung tune of: "I have kept my resolutions for 23 days going on 40, have attended daily Mass for almost every one of those days; I've prayed a similar number of Rosaries, and have filled my Catholic Relief Services Rice Bowl with all the money saved by fasting from candy and alcohol."

These are all worthy deeds in themselves, but they do not necessarily draw us to cast ourselves in radical dependence upon God's saving grace. Nor do they lead us to look beyond ourselves

to behold a world that is spiraling far outside of God's biblical, covenantal commitment to the people of Israel. God elects Israel to be a herald of his plan to place his saving power at our disposal, so that we can return to him in repentance and reconciliation.

The Middle East is a hostile, inhuman climate indeed. Our Lenten discipline should prompt us not only to personal conversion, but to fervent prayer and political advocacy that the status quo of war as usual should not prevail.

In his January address to Vatican diplomats from various countries gathered at the Holy See, Pope Francis cautioned: "All of us remain shocked by the October 7 attack on the Israeli people, in which great numbers of innocent persons were horribly wounded, tortured, and murdered, and many taken hostage. I renew my condemnation of this act and of every instance of terrorism and extremism. This is not the way to resolve disputes among peoples; those disputes are only aggravated and cause suffering for everyone."

The Holy Father continues, "Indeed, the attack provoked a strong Israeli military response in Gaza that has led to the death of tens of thousands of Palestinians, mainly civilians, including many young people and children, and has caused an exceptionally grave humanitarian crisis and inconceivable suffering."

The Pope implores that hospitals, schools, and places of worship (including those for the remaining 2,500 Christians in Palestine) receive all necessary protection that would be afforded

by a cease-fire on every front.

As King David realized, we are not called to live solely by the numbers; yet we do not disregard them entirely in our Lenten call to be convicted and allow our hearts (perhaps hardened by the atrocities of war) thawed by the facts before us. Credible sources report that in Gaza more than 10,000 of Gaza's 1.1 million children—1% of the total population—have been killed since an attack on Israel on October 7 and the assault on Gaza that has followed. The Save the Children website reports, "About 1,000 children in Gaza have lost one or both of their legs, many having them amputated without anesthetic, and will require a lifetime of medical care." These crimes only compound the abductions of children in Israel and the 33 Israeli children killed in the initial and ensuing attack.

We will never know peace on these terms. As with King David, we must come to our senses, so that more innocent victims will not perish as a result of the folly of political leaders. Persons of faith and goodwill must flex our prayers and muster our voices to proclaim, "No more war on these terms. Cease the carnage of children and innocent bystanders."

There are evil actors out there. But that should not prompt anyone to respond in a way that joins their ranks. For then all our Lenten labors and sacrifices will be for naught. And then the global climate will remain just as extreme, on account of human hearts that remain still frozen. Rather, with humble, broken hearts, we declare to the living God who lays claim to our worship and all our choices and advocacy: "I am ready. . . for Resurrection life."

Clima de Conversión en Cuaresma

No es sorpresa en Iowa, pero hemos tenido un clima muy extraño este invierno: tormentas de nieve, temperaturas que rayaban en lo ártico las cuales no podíamos contener sin importar cuántas capas de ropa nos pusieramos, atrapados en medio de días que pudieran considerarse templados que llevan a tomar decisiones algo peligrosas. Hace algunas semanas, manejaba cerca de un lago artificial que tenía estanques de agua encima de la capa de hielo que se derretía, y alcancé a ver a una persona de mediana edad en el centro mismo del lago caminando con su perro. Yo pensé: no creo que esa sea una buena idea — ¡a mí no me verían allí poniendo a prueba al hielo y a mi ángel de la guarda!

Me recordaba a la serie de películas del fallecido director de cine polaco Krystof Kieslowski de fines de los ochenta, *El Decálogo* — específicamente el primer episodio, con la intención de coincidir con el Primer Mandamiento: "Yo soy el Señor tu Dios, no tendrás otros dioses delante de mí." El episodio comienza con el científico en computación y ateo Krzyztof y su hijo joven Pawel

contando al hacer lagartijas. Luego trabajan juntos en un problema de matemáticas. Pawel está sorprendido por el poder de las computadoras; incluso se pregunta si la poderosa computadora de su padre le puede decir los sueños de su madre.

En un punto, padre e hijo se encuentran un perro muerto en frente de una iglesia y Pawel pregunta a su padre, "¿Qué es la muerte?" La respuesta es una concisa descripción médica que no le satisface. El niño sigue preguntando sobre el alma y sobre a dónde va ésta luego de la muerte, a lo que su padre responde, "Lo único que sobrevive son los logros y las memorias."

Pronto se aproxima la Navidad. Pawel sabe que su padre le va a regalar un par de patines para el hielo nuevos, y le suplica que lo deje usar los patines antes de la fiesta para poder ir a patinar sobre el cercano río congelado. Su padre, luego de ingresar en su computadora la temperatura exterior, calcula dos veces que el río puede soportar tres veces el peso de su hijo, y por lo tanto accede a

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Official

In order to provide better pastoral care for the faithful of the Diocese of Des Moines and in accord with Canon law, Bishop William Joensen appointed a team of priests to roles that will help him more effectively carry out his responsibilities in service to the Diocese of Des Moines. These priests will serve on a team of vicars. Their title of Very Reverend indicates they can, in specific circumstances outlined in Canon law, act on behalf of the Bishop. The following clergy have been appointed to this team.

Very Rev. Michael Amadeo, from Vicar General and pastor, Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, Ankeny, to Episcopal Vicar for Priests, effective Jan. 15, 2024, while continuing as pastor of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart, Ankeny.

Very Rev. Trevor Chicoine, while continuing as pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul, Atlantic; St. Mary, Anita; Our Lady of Grace, Griswold; and St. Timothy, Reno; and as censor librorum of the Diocese, to Episcopal Vicar for Divine Worship, effective Sept. 23, 2023.

Very Rev. David Fleming, from sabbatical, to Vicar General and Moderator of the Diocesan Council of Vicars, effective Jan. 15, 2024, while continuing to serve as diocesan exorcist.

Very Rev. P.J. McManus, while continuing as pastor of Christ the King, Des Moines, to Episcopal Vicar for Hispanic Ministry effective Sept. 22, 2023.

Very Rev. Christopher Pisut, to Judicial Vicar, effective Sept. 22, 2023, while continuing as pastor of St. Augustin, Des Moines.

Bishop Joensen also made the following appointment:

Rev. James Kirby, from administrator at St. Patrick, Missouri Valley, and St. Anne, Logan, to pastor of St. Patrick, Missouri Valley, and St. Anne, Logan effective Feb. 2, 2024.



Faithfully in Christ,
Most Rev. William Joensen, Ph.D.
Bishop



Jason Kurth
Chancellor

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Join us in supporting the mission of the Church of Southwest Iowa. The Annual Diocesan Appeal kicks off March 2-3.

A letter from Bishop William Joensen

Dear Friends in Christ,

In one of the most striking passages in Matthew's Gospel (25:31-46), we are called to welcome the stranger, visit the sick and imprisoned, and tend to those in need. We are enjoined to serve the least of our brothers and sisters, for when we do so we are serving Jesus himself. Those who minister and represent the Diocese of Des Moines seek to faithfully fulfill this Gospel mandate, offering hospitality, hope, and healing--all as part of our greater mission to enable people to encounter Jesus Christ and form deeper relationships with him and one another.

Our mission of Sowing God's Spirit – Cultivating Connections in Christ fosters mutual spiritual bonds among those we serve and those who serve us. Without the Annual Diocesan Appeal this endeavor would not be possible. The ADA provides

more than half of the material means that equip us to Sow God's Spirit in Southwest Iowa.

Through the ADA, our parishes receive practical administrative and ministerial support; our priests receive retirement and health benefits, and our seminarians receive robust preparation as they pursue the priesthood. Through participation in various venues of faith formation, our faithful are drawn into deeper friendship with Christ; further, focused outreach ministries serve persons, including those having special needs, with human and spiritual support.

I invite you to respond as the Spirit urges to make a gift to the ADA to advance our mission of Cultivating Connections in Christ. We accompany those who seek deeper personal connections with God and other individuals so that together we might abide in the communion of love who is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. A contribution of any size sustains

our collaborative mission expressed in 19 diocesan ministries and programs, providing vital support and resources for each parish.

I am consistently inspired and grateful for the commitment and sacrifice offered by a diverse array of our diocesan family. Your gift, no matter the size, is heartily appreciated. Thank you, and may God's blessing enfold you and your loved ones always!

Faithfully in Christ,

Most Rev. William M. Joensen, Ph.D.
Bishop of Des Moines

Queridos Amigos en Cristo,

En uno de los pasajes más sorprendentes del Evangelio de Mateo (25:31-46), estamos llamados a dar la bienvenida al extranjero, visitar a los enfermos y a los prisioneros, y atender aquellos en necesidad. Se nos ordena servir a los más pequeños de nuestros hermanos, porque cuando lo hacemos estamos sirviendo al mismo Jesús. Aquellos que hacen ministerio y representan a la Diócesis de Des Moines buscan cumplir fielmente este mandado del Evangelio, ofreciendo hospitalidad, esperanza y sanación- todo como parte de nuestra gran misión de permitir que las personas encuentren a Jesucristo y formen relaciones más profundas con él y con los demás.

Nuestra misión de Sembrar el Espíritu de Dios- Cultivar Conexiones en Cristo fomenta vínculos espirituales mutuos entre aquellos a quienes servimos y aquellos que nos sirven. Sin la Colecta Anual Diocesana (ADA) este esfuerzo no sería posible. La Colecta Anual Diocesana proporciona más de la

mitad de los medios materiales que nos equipan para Sembrar el Espíritu de Dios en el Suroeste de Iowa.

A través de la Colecta Anual Diocesana (ADA), nuestras parroquias reciben apoyo administrativo y ministerial práctico; nuestros sacerdotes reciben beneficios de jubilación y de salud, y nuestros seminaristas reciben una preparación sólida mientras se preparan para el sacerdocio. A través de la participación en varios lugares de formación en la fe, nuestros fieles se sienten atraídos hacia una amistad más profunda con Cristo. Además, los ministerios que se enfocan en servir y dar alcance a la gente con apoyo humano y espiritual, incluyendo aquellos con necesidades especiales.

Los invito a responder como el Espíritu los llame a hacer una donación a la Colecta Anual Diocesana (ADA) para avanzar en nuestra misión de Cultivar Conexiones en Cristo. Acompañamos a aquellos que buscan una relación personal más profunda con Dios y otras personas para que juntos podamos permanecer en la comunión de amor que es el Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo. Una contribución

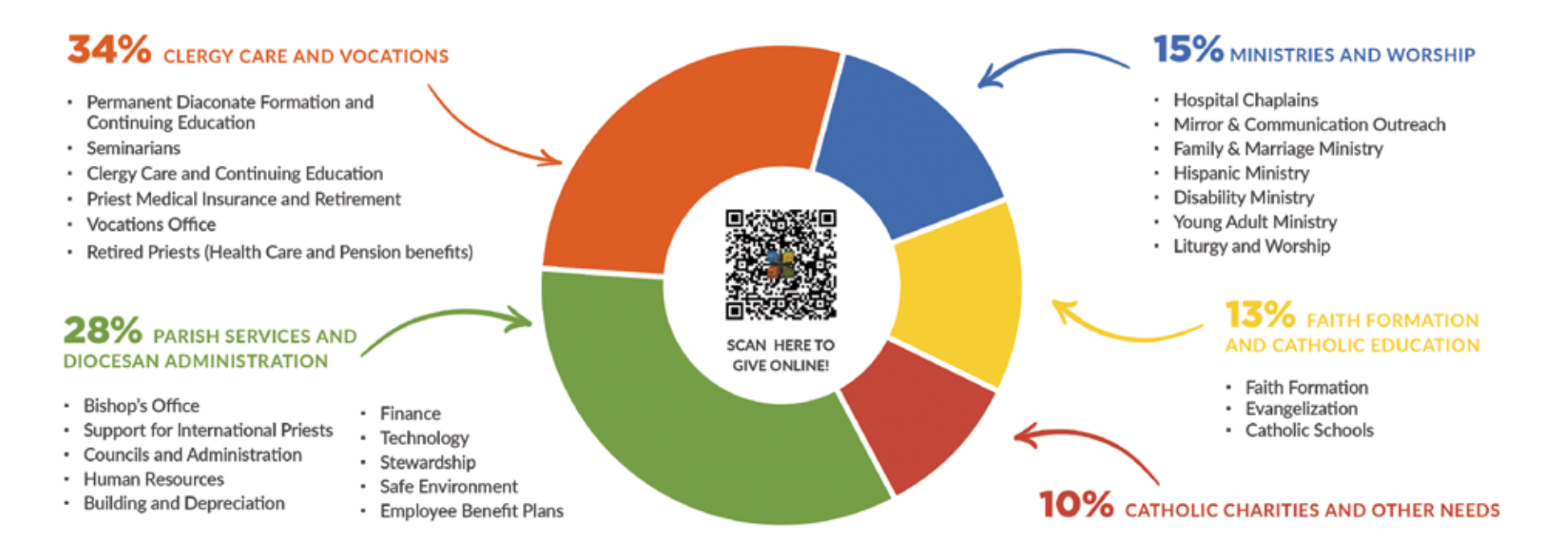
de cualquier tamaño sostiene nuestra misión colaborativa expresada en 19 ministerios diocesanos y programas que proporcionan los recursos y apoyo vital para cada parroquia

Me siento constantemente agradecido por el compromiso y sacrificio ofrecido por una diversa gama de nuestra familia diocesana. Su donación, sin importar el tamaño es apreciada de todo corazón. ¡Gracias, y que la bendición de Dios los envuelva siempre a usted y a sus seres queridos!

Fielmente en Cristo,

El Reverendísimo William M. Joensen, Ph.D.
Obispo de Des Moines

The Annual Diocesan Appeal provides 70% of the funding to support our 80 parishes of Southwest Iowa.



Visit DMDIOCESE.ORG/GIVING for more information on the ADA and charitable giving.

Newly formed team of vicars begin work

After four and a half years shepherding the Diocese of Des Moines, and following much consultation and strategic planning, Bishop William Joensen has reduced and reorganized his group of vicars to better govern and address administrative day-to-day duties of the Diocese.

The last time the Diocese implemented an organizational chart (2017), there were eight vicars assisting the Bishop.

Today, there are five. Each has certain authority within a defined scope and allows the Diocese to serve the faithful more

quickly and efficiently.

“As an example, where there may have been many people needing Bishop’s attention for various matters, now some of those decisions can be made by people who have

the authority to act in his name,” said Father David Fleming.

Who are they and what do they do?



Father Michael Amadeo



Father David Fleming



Father Christopher Pisut



Father Trevor Chicoine



Father PJ McManus

The Diocese is bound by Church law to have a vicar general, who is to assist the Bishop in the governance of the whole

Diocese. In the Des Moines Diocese, Father Michael Amadeo, pastor of Our Lady’s Immaculate Heart Parish in Ankeny, served

in this part-time position for six years under two different bishops, while also serving one of the largest parishes in the Diocese. He will no longer be vicar general but is continuing to help the Diocese by taking on a new part-time role as episcopal vicar for priests while serving his parish.

Father Fleming, who has served both in administration as diocesan chancellor and vicar general, and in pastoral ministry as a pastor, has been appointed vicar general effective Jan. 15. The role changes from a part-time position to nearly full time, thereby assisting in the efficient administration of the Bishop’s Office.

The Diocese is also required to have a judicial vicar, with certain authority related to the Tribunal and other judicial matters. In the Des Moines Diocese, this is Father Christopher Pisut, who continues in this role while also serving as pastor of St. Augustin Parish in Des Moines.

Bishops are also able, but not required, to have episcopal vicars, to assist in the governance with authority in specific areas, such as regions (also called deaneries in some dioceses), or over specific areas of ministry such as Hispanic Ministry, Divine Worship, clergy, etc.

Newly appointed are:

- Father Trevor Chicoine to episcopal vicar for Divine Worship, while continuing to serve as pastor of Ss. Peter and Paul in Atlantic, St. Mary in Anita, Our Lady of Grace in Griswold, and St. Timothy in Reno.

- Father PJ McManus, to episcopal vicar for Hispanic Ministry while continuing as pastor of Christ the King Parish in Des Moines.

The Des Moines diocesan vicars will work as a group in concert with Bishop Joensen in the governance of the Diocese.

Where most priests may use the title of Reverend, a vicar may use the title Very Reverend thereby indicating that the Bishop has delegated certain authority to him. The title is associated with the office he fills and, when no longer a vicar, he resumes using Reverend.

Two other priests in the Des Moines Diocese can use the title Very Reverend. The title can be used in honor of rectors or pastors of basilicas or cathedrals. In the Des Moines Diocese, this would include Father Aquinas Nichols, pastor of the Basilica of St. John, and Father Nivin Scaria, rector of St. Ambrose Cathedral Parish, both in Des Moines.

Parish youth continue longtime tradition



Religious education students kindergarten through high school at St. Mary of Assumption Parish in Panama with Father Michael Antoh presented a Christmas play with a soup supper following in the parish hall. This play has been a tradition for years and the youth enjoy putting it on for the parishioners.



InnerVisions HealthCare has a staff nurse opening. Qualifications include a passion for the mission and values, excellent verbal and written communication skills, and a team player. The ability to manage crisis and challenging situations professionally, calmly and effectively is critical. A bachelor’s degree is preferred, 3-5 years of nursing experience is desired, and IA RN Licensure must be in good standing. Limited OB Ultrasound training provided. Compensation commensurate with experience.

'You need to help people. It's the right thing to do.'

Ankeny couple feels called to help others through St. Vincent de Paul

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

Kathy and Bob Lickteig are partners – in family, in faith, and in charity.

A few years ago, Kathy had been thinking they should volunteer somewhere. A note about St. Vincent de Paul caught her eye. About the same time, after daily Mass, someone approached her and asked if she and Bob would consider joining the local St. Vincent de Paul conference.

"It was something I knew very little about. I knew of the thrift stores," she said. But she learned "there's so much more to it: The food pantries, the social services, the back-to-work program."

St. Vincent de Paul is celebrating 100 years of helping people in central Iowa, both those who need immediate help like food, and those who need help getting back on their feet by getting a job.

"I think that's what drew us to it," she said. "The more we learned about the organization, we said yeah, this is where we need to be helping."

Bob grew up on a farm, which instilled in him a solid work ethic and a get-things-done attitude.

He's spent his career problem solving. So when he realized he could help others with their needs, he jumped in. He's been volunteering through the Knights of Columbus since 1981. When he learned about St. Vincent de Paul, he joined Kathy in stepping up.

They worked at the food pantry in Des Moines for a while before the pandemic. After the pandemic, they've restarted. She serves as the treasurer of their conference, and he serves as president.

"I'm accomplishing something. You have a beginning and an end. You're fixing things, and when you leave you feel satisfied that you've done something," he

said. "There's a need and it's getting bigger."

Two Saturdays a month for six hours each day, there's a 14-foot long truck in the back of Our Lady's Immaculate Heart property in Ankeny. Chances are, you can find Bob there. His warm smile welcomes each person or family that drives up with donations of food, personal care products, diapers, clothing and small household items for the thousands of people served by St. Vincent de Paul each year.

Folks come from as far as Marshalltown to the east to Madrid to the west and all points in between, mostly in northern Polk County.

Bob helps unload items, hops up into the truck to sort and pack the goods, and thanks all those who come by with something that someone else could use.

His dedication and time commitment to filling the truck twice a month are appreciated.

"If it wasn't for Bob, it would be falling apart," said Don Lamberti, who with Evertt Riewer founded the St. Vincent de Paul drop-off donations initiative at OLIH years ago. Eventually, they transitioned from having a shed that held dropped-off items to the truck.

"We needed some fresh blood. He's taken it to the next level. I'm glad to have him around," Lamberti said.

Laurie Reedy, of St. Vincent de Paul, calls Lickteig a servant leader.

"We love Bob's enthusiasm and willingness to go the extra mile," she said. "We are so blessed to have him support and answer the call of SVDP to 'Help Us, Help Others' in Des Moines and surrounding communities."

Bob is extremely grateful for the support of the Knights of Columbus at Our Lady's Immaculate Heart and St. Luke the Evangelist, both in Ankeny. The Lickteigs have been active in their KC council, too. Last year, Bob was honored by being inducted into the Iowa Knights of



Bob Lickteig helps coordinate a twice monthly collection effort with the support of Knights of Columbus. They fill a truck twice a month with everything from nonperishable food and clothing to small household goods that are delivered to St. Vincent de Paul for distribution to those in need.

Columbus Hall of Fame.

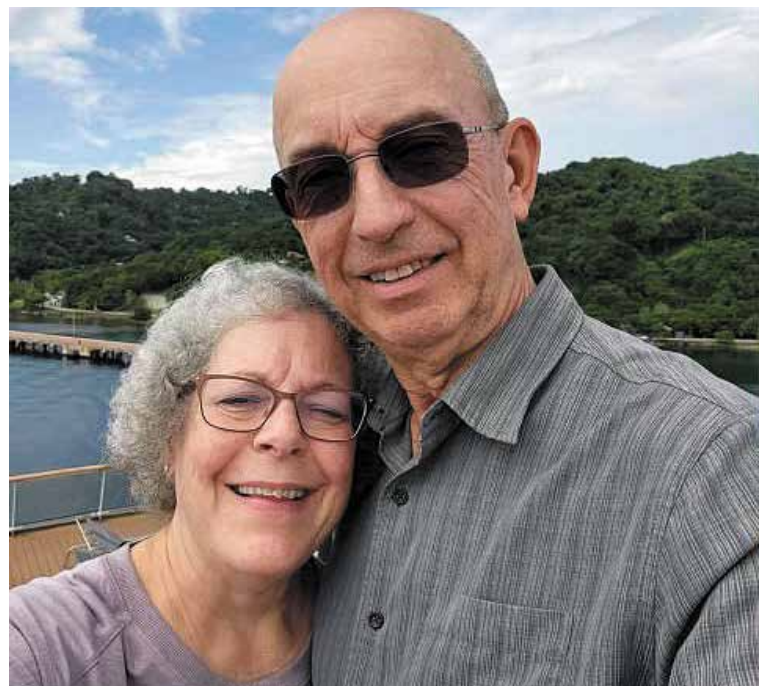
Why does he spend so much time volunteering?

"You need to help people. It's the right thing to do," he said. "I've been very fortunate. My wife and I always lived within our means. We saved. Now we're giving back. You don't need to make a lot of money to give back."

Kathy feels the same way. "As part of our faith, we're called to help others," she said.

Bob was thrilled the day a couple, their six-year-old child and a grandmother came to help unload vehicles and fill up the truck for a couple of hours. And he hopes more families will spend some time lending a hand.

"It's satisfying that you're accomplishing something and you're teaching your kids," he said. "If you keep busy, you show a good example for others and eventually they pick up on that and they'll do the same thing."



Bob Lickteig spent a career solving problems at various companies. He's putting those skills to use now by lending a helping hand with his wife, Kathy, through St. Vincent de Paul.

Get your message out to 30,000 Catholic households in central and southwest Iowa by advertising in The Catholic Mirror. Call Sandy at 515-237-5046 or email communications@dmdiocese.org.

SAVE THE DATE!
April 20, 2024
Council Bluffs, Iowa
Annual Women's Conference

MEETING JESUS IN THE EUCHARIST
 featuring Liz Kelly and Angela Copenhaver
 Mass with Bishop William Joensen at Corpus Christi parish
 Time: 8:45 - 2:30. Cost of \$25 includes continental breakfast & hot lunch.

Details/Registration Info will be on Facebook Des Moines Diocesan Council of Catholic Women, at DesMoinesDCCW.org and in the March 2024 Catholic Mirror.
 Email DesMoinesCCW@gmail.com for more information. **All women are invited!**

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Around the Diocese

Feb. 18 & 19 Sun. & Mon. Parish Mission

MADRID – St. Malachy Parish is having a parish mission on the True Presence. Anthony Digmann, of Dyersville, will speak on the True Presence on Feb. 18 at 3 p.m. & Feb. 19 at 7 p.m. St. Malachy is located just 40 minutes from downtown Des Moines.

Feb. 18 Sunday

Pray a Monthly Rosary

DES MOINES -- Join fellow Iowans to pray the rosary the third Sunday of every month at 1:30 p.m. (rain or shine) at the Iowa State Capitol, west side steps. For more information call Diana at 515-974-7691 or Jeff at 515-778-6087.

Feb. 22 Thursday

St. Thomas Classical Academy

ALTOONA – St. Thomas Classical Academy is a hybrid academy supporting the Catholic home school community of greater Des Moines helping students from first grade through high school. The academy focuses on art, literature, music, poetry, Latin, mathematics, and the natural world. For more information, go to stthomasclassical.org or contact Mike Smith, at msmith@stthomasclassical.org to schedule a family visit.

Feb. 24 Saturday

St. Patrick Fiesta Party

DUNLAP – St. Patrick Parish is holding a St. Patrick Fiesta Party at 5 p.m. in the St. Patrick Parish Hall on Hwy. 30 in Dunlap. Dinner is a free-will offering and

there will be games, drinks, entertainment, and a live auction.

Feb. 25 Sunday

Spaghetti & Meatball Dinner

CHURCHVILLE – Assumption Shrine is hosting its annual spaghetti and meatball dinner in the Assumption Hall, 870 West St. in Churchville, located 2 miles northwest of Martensdale. Serving from 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Cost is \$10/adults \$5/children 5-10. Carry out is available. There will also be a silent auction & raffle.

March 2 Saturday

Shamrocks & Shenanigans

DES MOINES -- Join Catholic Charities for its annual fundraiser, Shamrocks & Shenanigans, at The Shop in Downtown Des Moines, 901 Cherry St. Enjoy some Irish fun in support of vital programs which assist those most in need in our communities. Visit catholiccharitiesdm.org or follow Catholic Charities on social media at @CCDesMoines.

March 9

Mass of Remembrance

DES MOINES -- Catholic Woman's League of Des Moines will hold a Mass of Remembrance at 11 a.m. at Christ the King Parish, 5711 SW 9th Street. Bishop William Joensen will celebrate Mass. All ladies of the Diocese are invited to a catered luncheon with Bishop Joensen following Mass in the parish hall. Cost of the luncheon is \$20 per person. Please make reservations for the luncheon with Carol Weyer, 515-975-6776 by March 5.

March 17 Sunday

Iowa Wolves Faith & Family

DES MOINES -- Catholic Charities will be at the Iowa Wolves Faith and Family Day game at 3 p.m. at the Iowa Events Center. Go to CatholicCharitiesDM.org to find out how to get tickets.

Staley's Fried Chicken Dinner

NORWALK – St. John the Apostle is hosting a fried chicken feast in the parish hall from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Everyone is invited. Cost is \$12/adults, \$5/children ages 6-12, kids 5 and under eat free. A silent auction will be held in conjunction with the dinner. Carry out is available. Tickets can be purchased at the door.

150th Anniversary

NEOLA – St. Patrick Parish is celebrating its 150th anniversary with Mass at 9:30 a.m. and dinner at 11 a.m. Free-will donation will be accepted.

March 15-17 Fri. – Sun.

Book Sale

DES MOINES – Christ the King is having a parish library book sale in the parish hall. Cost for books is donation only. Dates and times are: Friday 4:30- 7 p.m.; Saturday 9 a.m. – 7 p.m. Children's story hour at 10:30 a.m. Face painting at 1 p.m.; Sunday 8 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. New, near-new, and gently used books. Inventory includes children's, classics, religious (Catholic and Non-Catholic), fiction and non-fiction, history, home and garden, and more. All are welcome. All proceeds go to our parish library.

Día de la Candelaria celebrated with the blessing of statues of Jesus



Sacred Heart Parish in West Des Moines celebrated the Presentation of the Lord in the Temple on Feb. 4 with a Blessing of the Candles, blessing of statues of Baby Jesus, and tamales. In Hispanic communities, the feast called Candelaria is celebrated during the Feast of the Presentation. A statue of Jesus is dressed in a special way and brought to church to be blessed just as Mary took Jesus to the temple to be blessed. Father Emmanuel Bassey did the blessing.

Benefit concert exceeds goal



St. Francis parishioners dramatic soprano Patricia Bach and pianist Janet Bradford (pictured above) presented a benefit American Spiritual concert to raise money for the education of Ghanaian men in the Techiman Diocese who want to become priests but are unable to attend seminary due to lack of funds. The concert exceeded its goal by raising more than \$4,800. St. Francis Knights of Columbus and Women In God's Service assisted with the effort. St. Francis has two Ghana priests serving the parish: Father John Brobbey and Father Michael Acquah.

La Diócesis continúa con su compromiso con la seguridad

Hay muchas formas para presentar quejas por abuso

Por más de 20 años, la Diócesis de Des Moines ha marcado como una prioridad esencial la seguridad de niños y jóvenes de su comunidad.

Es importante que todos los miembros de la comunidad sepan como reportar una acusación de abuso sexual de un menor por un miembro del clero. Hay muchas formas de presentar una queja.

- Una persona puede ir directamente con el Encargado de Asistencia para Víctimas, Sam Porter. Él no es un empleado de la Iglesia, sino que es miembro del personal de Servicios para Víctimas del Condado de Polk. Él puede ayudar a las personas a navegar por el proceso de someter una queja. No importa cuánto tiempo haya pasado desde que sucedió el abuso, una víctima puede presentar una queja. Él también asiste en la búsqueda de servicios de apoyo y de consejería. Puede llamarle al 515-286-2015 o por email a Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov.

- Se pueden tomar quejas en cualquier oficina diocesana pero, las que están designadas para recibir quejas, están a cargo de Eileen Cull Valdez, directora de Recursos Humanos y de Ambiente Seguro, a quien pueden contactar al 515-237-5085 o evaldes@dmdiocese.org; o Jason Kurth, Canciller, al teléfono 515-237-5061 o jkurth@dmdiocese.org. La política de la Diócesis es de siempre reportar acusaciones a las autoridades del orden público.

- Una persona puede presentar su queja a un párroco u otro oficial en cualquiera de las 80 parroquias dentro de la Diócesis de Des Moines. La Diócesis requiere que todo el clero, personal y voluntarios de parroquias, escuelas y demás organizaciones relacionadas dentro de la Diócesis deben reportar al Obispo cualquier queja o sospecha que hayan recibido en donde un niño es víctima de abuso, ya sea por medio de un supervisor o de manera directa. La única excepción es cuando un sacerdote se entera del abuso por medio de un penitente durante el sacramento de la reconciliación ya que está sujeto al sello de la confesión. En situaciones como ésta, el sacerdote deberá animar al penitente para que reporte la ofensa a las autoridades civiles y de la Iglesia.

- Las quejas pueden hacerse directamente a las autoridades del orden público o agencias de protección de menores.

Para más información sobre reportes de abuso, o el proceso que se sigue, visite la página "Victim Assistance" en la página web de la diócesis en dmdiocese.org

Diocese continues commitment to safety

Multiple options available to file an abuse complaint

For more than 20 years, the Diocese of Des Moines has made the safety of children and young people an essential priority for its community.

It is important that all within the community know how to report an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by clergy. There are several ways to file a complaint.

- A person can go directly to diocesan Victim Assistance Advocate Sam Porter. He is not employed by the Church but is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services. He can assist people through the process of filing a complaint. No matter how long ago the abuse occurred, a victim can file a complaint. He also helps them seek support and counseling services. He can be reached at 515-286-2015 or Sam.Porter@polkcountyiowa.gov.

- Complaints can be taken to any diocesan office but those designated to receive complaints are led by Eileen Cull Valdez, director of Human Resources and Safe Environment, who can be reached at 515-237-5085 or evaldez@dmdiocese.org; or, Jason Kurth, chancellor, 515-237-5061 or jkurth@dmdiocese.org. Diocesan policy is to always report allegations to law enforcement.

- A person can bring their allegation to a pastor or other official in any of the 80 parishes within the Diocese of Des Moines. The Diocese requires that all clergy, staff and volunteers for parishes, schools and related organizations within the Diocese must report to the Bishop received allegations or suspicions that a child is the victim of abuse, whether through an appropriate supervisor or directly. The only exception is for a priest when he learns of the abuse from a penitent in the sacrament of reconciliation and is bound by the seal of confession. In this situation, the priest should encourage the penitent to report the offense to civil and Church authorities.

- Allegations can be made directly to law enforcement or child protective agencies.

For more information on reporting abuse, or the process that follows, go to the "Victim Assistance" page on the diocesan website at dmdiocese.org.

Christ Our Life speakers announced

Continued from page 1

Jesuit Father Robert Spitzer, Ph.D. originally from Honolulu, is the former president of Gonzaga University (1998-2009) and is the president of the Magis Center and the Spitzer Center, which focuses on the intersection of science, reason, and faith. Father Spitzer doesn't let his near total blindness hold him back from his ministry.

- Father Craig Vasek, raised on a small farm and ordained in the Diocese of Crookston, Minnesota, Father is one of 58 priests named a Eucharistic Revival speaker. He travels across the country helping people grow in understanding and love for the Eucharist. He hosts the podcast "Evangelical Disciple" and shows on Real Presence Radio Network.

- Sister Josephine Garrett, of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth, was raised Baptist, converted and took her final vows in 2020. A native Texan, she had a highly successful career in banking. She is a licensed counselor and expert on helping those suffering from traumatic experiences to finding healing and joy.

- Monsignor Stephen Rossetti is a licensed psychologist, an approved exorcist, a spiritual director to other priests, and an author. Founder and president of the St. Michael Center for Spiritual Renewal, he conducts extensive research on the wellness of priests and leads clergymen in spiritual renewal.

- Jeff Cavins is a former Protestant pastor who returned to the Catholic faith, internationally renowned creator of The Great Adventures Bible Study program, and host of the EWTN show "Life on the Rock." He is the director of the Archbishop Harry J. Flynn Catechetical Institute based in St. Paul, Minnesota.

- Jason Evert is a best-selling author and speaker on the virtue of chastity, Theology of the Body, and the soulmate concept. He founded Totus Tuus Press and Chastity Project, an organization that promotes chastity to high school and college students. He holds a master's degree in theology from Franciscan University of Steubenville, and undergraduate degrees in theology, counseling and a minor in philosophy.

- Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow returns to the conference and brings his wife, Julie, for the first time. Originally from Scotland, Magnus's life calling began over a pint of beer and brotherly

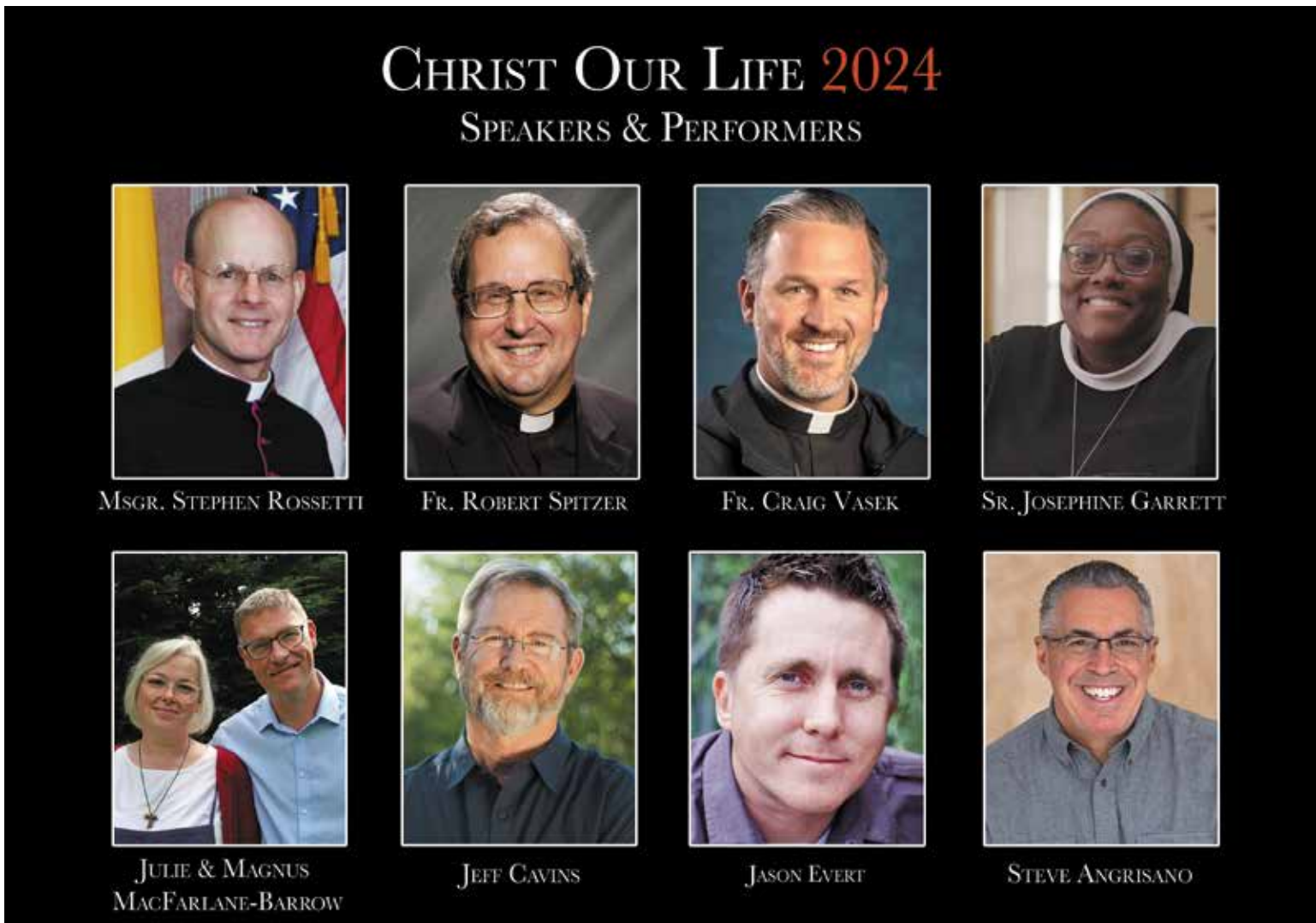
brainstorming on how to help war refugees. From there, he founded Mary's Meals, which provides food to students across the world. He and Julie are the parents of seven children.

- Steve Angrisano is returning to the conference. A joyful, reverent music missionary, he combines singer, songwriter, and storyteller talents. He's performed at World Youth Days, National Catholic Youth Conferences, national pro-life marches and has served as the conference's worship leader since 2012.

- Jon Leonetti, known across the state as the host of The Catholic Morning Show on Iowa Catholic Radio, will serve as emcee. He entertains and evangelizes with colorful anecdotes, interesting introductions, and prayerful segues. He's a nationally known speaker, author, mission presenter, and pilgrimage leader.

- Bishop William Joensen will provide the homily during Mass on Sept. 28. Ordained a priest in 1989, he holds a doctorate in philosophy, has served in parishes, as a spiritual director, and in a variety of roles at Loras College in Dubuque. He became the bishop of the Diocese of Des Moines in 2019.

- Father Fabian Moncada will preach the homily at the Mass on Sept. 29. A native of Bogota, Colombia, the pastor of Our Lady of the Americas Parish in Des Moines was ordained in 2013, the first Latino priest of the Diocese of Des Moines.



Plans underway for biennial faith conference

PARISH OUTREACH
There is at least one grassroots parish volunteer for every parish in Iowa. There are more than 414 COL "Go To" volunteers in Iowa along with others spread across the Midwest as well as in Colorado and Texas. They begin their recruitment efforts in March with local meetings. They will sell paper tickets in parishes starting in early summer. Online tickets are available now.

EXHIBITORS
As has been the case in recent years, there is a waiting list for open vendor spaces. If interested in joining this list, contact Lois Brookhart at 515-255-5230 or loisb@divinetreasuresinc.net.

TICKETS / EVENT FEES
Tickets can be purchased online now at <https://givebutter.com/COL2024>. The price for adults, whether in-person or livestream, is \$30. Even though youth can attend in-person or online for free for the first time this year, for attendance purposes, a ticket must still be obtained through the website. Priests, deacons and religious also can participate at no-cost yet they must obtain a ticket.

ACCOMMODATIONS
Sign language interpreters will be available at the conference. The arena will designate a breastfeeding station once again for COL. The arena provides accommodations for a variety of needs for those with disabilities. Blocks of hotel rooms at special rates in Des Moines are available, as seen on the COL website: christourlifeiowa.com/about-des-moines/.

Pope Francis has declared 2024 to be the Year of Prayer.
How do you pray?
We'd like to produce short videos on people's favorite way to pray.
Would you be willing to share your favorite way with us?
Email communications@dmdiocese.org

Victim Assistance Advocate

The diocese's Victim Assistance Advocate, Sam Porter, is a staff member at Polk County Victim Services.

He helps people who are or were minors when they were victims of abuse by the clergy through a complaint process.

He also helps them seek support and counseling services. Porter can be reached at 515-286-2024 or Sam.Porter@polkcountyowa.gov.

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Fish fry season

The following is a list of Lenten fish fry dinner locations, times, cost, and alternate meals to fish. The dinners will be every Friday during Lent, Feb. 16 through Feb. 22 unless otherwise noted.

Adair

St. John
Dates: Feb. 23 and March 8; 5-7 p.m. (drive through or dine in); \$15; Alternate is shrimp.

Adel

St. John
Dates: Feb. 16, 23 and March 1, 8; 5-7 p.m.; \$12/meal; \$40/family max; Alternate is grilled cheese sandwich

Atlantic

Ss Peter and Paul
Times: 5-7 p.m.; \$15/adults; \$5/children ages 5-10; free/under age 5; Alternates: \$15 shrimp Alfredo pasta; \$10 mac & cheese

Audubon

St. Patrick
Times: 5-7:30 p.m.; \$12

Avoca - St. Mary

Walnut - St. Patrick
Dates: March 1, 15; 5:30-7 p.m. in the Avoca Legion Hall; \$15/adults, \$5/children ages 4-10; free/children age 3 and under

Chariton

Sacred Heart
Times: 5-6:45 p.m.; \$14/adults; \$6/children ages 6-12; free/children ages 5 and under; Alternate: grilled cheese

Creston

Holy Spirit
Times: 5:30-7 p.m.; \$15/adults (13 & over); \$5/children ages 4-12; free/children age 3 and under; Alternate: fish tacos, mac & cheese

Earling

St. Joseph
Dates: Feb. 16 & March 1; 5:30-7:30 p.m.; \$15/adults; \$10/children ages 2-10; free/ages 2 and under; Alternate: mac & cheese

Glenwood

Our Lady of the Holy Rosary
Dates: Feb. 16, 23, March 1, 8, 15; Doors open at 5 p.m. until gone (carry out or dine in); \$13/adults; \$4/children; alternate: mac & cheese

Hamburg

St. Mary
Date: March 22; 5:30-7 p.m.; free-will offering

Harlan

St. Michael
Dates: Feb. 23 & March 8; 5-7 p.m.; \$15/adults; \$7/children; free/ages 5 and under; Alternate: fish tacos, mac & cheese

Indianola

St. Thomas Aquinas
Times: 5:30 - 7 p.m.; \$13/adults; \$6/ages 6-12; free/ages 5 & under; take-outs are available.

Missouri Valley

St. Patrick
Times: 5-7 p.m.; \$10/adults; \$8/senior citizens; \$5/ages 6-10; free/children ages 5 & under
Alternate: mac & cheese, soup, salad bar

Neola

St. Patrick
Times: 5-7 p.m.; \$15/adults; \$5/ages 5-10; free/ages 4 & under; Alternate: grilled cheese sandwich

Osceola

St. Bernard
Times: 5:30 - 7 p.m. \$14/adults; \$7/children ages 12 and under

Perry

St. Patrick (in the school gym, 1302 5th St.)
Times: 5:30 - 7 p.m.; \$10/adults; \$5/ages 5-10; free/ages 4 & under; \$30 for a family with children; Alternate: fish tacos or \$3 more for shrimp

Red Oak

St. Mary
Dates: Feb. 23, March 8, 22; 5-6:30 p.m.; \$15/adults; \$10/ages 5-11; free/under age 5

St. Marys

Immaculate Conception
Dates: Feb. 23 - March 15; 5-7 p.m. at the St. Marys Hall, 121 Saint James St.; \$30/immediate family; \$12/adults; \$5/children under 12

Council Bluffs parishes

Corpus Christi

Times: 4:30-7 p.m.; \$14/adults; \$7/children ages 10 and under; alternate: cheese pizza

St. Patrick

Dates: Feb. 23 & March 8; 5-7 p.m.; \$15/adults; \$7/children; free/ages 5 and under; alternate: shrimp, mac & cheese, cheese pizza offered on Feb. 23 and March 8; fish tacos offered on March 1

St. Peter

Dates: March 15 & 23; 5:30-7:30 p.m.; \$20/adults; \$10/children; NOTE: This is a shrimp boil, not a fish fry.

Des Moines area parishes

Altoona

Ss John and Paul
Times: 4:30-7 p.m. (dine-in, carry-out, or drive-thru); \$14/adults; \$6/children ages 6-12; free/children ages 5 and under; alternate: mac & cheese, cheese pizza; add a skewer of grilled shrimp for market price.

Ankeny

Our Lady's Immaculate Heart
Dates: Feb. 23, March 8, 22; 5-7 p.m.; Free-will offering; alternate: grilled cheese & tater tots
St. Luke the Evangelist
Dates: Feb. 16, March 1, 15; 4:30-7 p.m.; Free-will offering; alternate: mac & cheese

Carlisle

St. Elizabeth Seton
Dates: Feb. 23, March 8, 22; 5-7 p.m. (dine-in, carry-out or drive thru); free-will offering (suggested \$13 each); alternate: mac & cheese

Granger

Assumption
Times: 5:30 - 7 p.m. (dine in or drive-up); Free-will donation; Alternate: cheese pizza

Norwalk

St. John the Apostle
Times: 5:30 - 7 p.m.; \$12/adults; \$10/children ages 12 and under; Alternate: cheese pizza; mac & cheese

Urbandale

St. Pius X
Times: 5-6:30 p.m.; Free-will offering; Alternate: Various soups, grilled cheese

Waukee

St. Boniface
Times: 5-7 p.m. (take-out available); \$12/adults; \$7/children ages 5-10; free/children; \$45 for family/household; Alternate: Spaghetti, cheese pizza

West Des Moines

Sacred Heart
Times: 5:30-7 p.m.; \$14/adults (13 and older); \$7/children ages 5-12; free/children age 4 and under; \$45/family maximum; Alternate: Cheese pizza; mac & cheese; fish taco
St. Francis of Assisi
Times: 5:30-7:15 p.m.; \$15/adults; \$5/children ages 6-11; free-will offering/children age 5 and under; Alternative: Cheese pizza, baked potato, mac & cheese

Des Moines parishes

All Saints

Times: 5-7 p.m.; \$11/adults; \$8/children ages 5-12; free/children under 5; alternate: grilled cheese, mac & cheese

Basilica of St. John

Times: 4:45-6:30 p.m.; \$12/adults (age 11 and above); \$5/children ages 4-10; free/children age 3 and under; \$50/family; alternate: egg rolls, Spanish rice, mac & cheese

Christ the King

Times: 5-7 p.m.; \$13/adults, \$5/children; alternate: cheese pizza, French fries, mac & cheese

Holy Trinity

Dates: Feb. 16, March 1, 22; 5:30-7 p.m.; \$12/adults; \$6/children; \$50/large family; alternate: mac & cheese

St. Ambrose Cathedral

Times: 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m.; \$8/person; alternate: fish & chips

St. Anthony

Times: 5-7 p.m.; \$12/adults; \$5/children ages 5 and under for children's meal of mac & cheese w/ fries and dessert; alternate: pupusa

St. Augustin

Dates: Feb. 16, March 8; 5:30-7 p.m.; \$15/adults; free/children ages 12 and under; \$50/family; alternate: Duong's shrimp, mac & cheese, complete taco & nacho bar including cheese quesadillas, & grilled cheese sandwiches

St. Joseph

Times: 4:30 - 7:00 p.m. (dine in or drive-up); \$13/adults; \$5/children's menu; \$40/family; alternate: cheese pizza; mac & cheese

St. Mary of Nazareth

Times: 5-6:30 p.m.; \$13/adults; \$7/children ages 12 and under; \$25/couple; Alternate: mac & cheese; rice pilaf

St. Theresa

Dates: Feb. 23 & March 8; 5:30-7 p.m. at St. Theresa School; Free-will offering; Alternate: Fish taco, cheese pizza, mac & cheese

Creston students gear up for Lent with a retreat



Photo by Erin Higgins

Father Patrick Amedeka and a student at St. Patrick Catholic School in Creston work on a Lenten scavenger hunt during a recent parish/school Lenten retreat night.

Make a family plan for living Lent to the fullest. Find resources, fresh ideas and more family faith opportunities at dmdiocese.org/living-lent

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Longtime organist says music enhances worship

By Anne Marie Cox
Staff Writer

For more than 50 years, Peggy Baumgarten played the organ for St. Augustine Parish in Milo.

She didn't feel qualified for it. Her experience, when she began in 1969, was just three years of piano.

But there was a need and she helped.

"Everyone insisted I did a good job. I just couldn't see the church without an organist," she said.

St. Augustine is part of what was a trio of parishes called Holy Trinity of Southeast Warren County, comprised of St. Mary of Perpetual Help in Rosemount (which burned down in 2004), St. Mary of the Assumption in Laco-na, and St. Augustine in Milo.

The organist in Rosemount was looking for organ players for the Milo church and recruited girls.

"She knew I played some piano in high school," Baumgarten remembered. "She got us all started on Christmas. We all had to play one of the hymns. That started it all."

For a while, she and another

er lady shared duties until the church in Milo burned down in 1976. A new church was built and dedicated in 1979, but Baumgarten's music partner didn't continue playing the organ.

She did it for nearly 10 years herself until another teenage girl started helping in 2017. A few years later, she couldn't continue and it was Baumgarten again.

Though she may have doubted her skill, and it wasn't always easy (she had five children with her at church), she played the organ for Mass and funerals.

Why?

Music is an important part of worshipping God, she said.

"I think music helps to make the Mass. Music adds a lot to the worship. It's just not the same when you don't have the music there."

Baumgarten recently passed on the opportunity to provide music to someone else.

"Peggy continues to help out when needed," said Amy Welch, a fellow parishioner at St. Augustine Parish. "While the organist was gone for the Christmas Masses, Peggy was there."

Baumgarten hopes those who have musical abilities offer to share their gift of music with others.



With just three years of piano lessons, Peggy Baumgarten was asked to play the organ at her church. Though she doubted her skill, she helped because she says music enhances the worship experience for everyone who comes. She encourages those who have musical talent to help their parish music ministry.

"In these small parishes, a lot of them need help," she said. "It's important to just volunteer if they know there's a need."

The parish is appreciative of her dedication.

"Peggy is one of the most kindhearted people, and a beacon of God's love," Welch said.

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Christian Family board meets in Kansas

Rick and Sandy Hoenig, of St. Joseph Church in Winterset, attended the winter board meeting for the Christian Family Movement Jan. 26-28 at the Queen of the Holy Rosary Church in Wea, Kansas.

The Hoenigs are one of ten couples who serve on the national board of directors.

The mission of the CFM is to promote Christian marriage and family life to help people to live the Christian faith in everyday life, and to promote society through actions of love, service, and example.

The international organization is preparing to celebrate its 75th anniversary Aug. 3-4 in Mundelein, Illinois. During this celebration, Deacon Gary and Kay Atchison, of Ames, will be awarded the distinguished Pat and Patty Crowley Award for their lifetime service to CFM. For more information, go to cfm.org

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Living LENT

Are you ready for Lent?

This year instead of just surviving Lent, lean in and live it! How? Get ready by making a Lenten plan, follow along with weekly devotionals & reflections, engage in family conversation with starter prompts, and try faith activities for kids of all ages!

Find all our Lent resources at:
dmdiocese.org/living-lent

Two seminarians have special experiences in Rome



Deacon Luis Cabrera and fellow Theology IV seminarians served as deacons at Pope Francis' Mass for the Solemnity of the Epiphany.

Photo by the North American College in Rome
Seminarian Connor Lynch was installed as a Lector in Rome, where he is studying. This is the first of the two ministries major seminarians receive before ordination. The second is being installed as acolyte.

Shelby County in its 30th year of praying monthly for life

By Kathy Graeve

Shelby County continued its monthly holy hour on Jan. 21 to end abortion and protect the sanctity of life.

It was held at St. Mary, Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Portsmouth.

The group prayed the 15 decade rosary with pro-life meditations, prayer, and litany to St. Joseph, the Divine Mercy chaplet, prayer to St. Michael, and prayer to the guardian angel of the United States, all for protection, peace, and help for life and our country.

Those attending were: Kathy Graeve, of Neola, Paul and Arlene Zimmerman, of Westphalia, Peg Ptsche and son Dave Ptsche of Portsmouth, Betty Foxhove, Earling, and Denise Reinig, of Portsmouth.

The February prayers and holy hour will be on Feb. 18 at 1:30 p.m. at St. Peter Church in Defiance. All are invited.

The holy hour was started after attending the March for Life in 1994. This is the group's 30th year of praying.

St. Thomas Classical Academy

family visit days Feb. 8, 15 and 22 and March 7

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Get your questions answered

If you've got a question for columnist Father John Ludwig, a retired priest of the Diocese of Des Moines, send your question to communications@dmdiocese.org or The Catholic Mirror, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50309.

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Night to Shine prom promotes inclusivity



Photos by Robert Nandell

Sacred Heart Church in West Des Moines hosted a prom Feb. 9, an experience centered on God's love for people with special needs.

Called Night to Shine, the event drew 120 special needs guests ranging in age from 15 to 79. It was sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation through a grant received by the parish.

The foundation's hope is that those with special needs come to know God's love and experience belonging in their communities and the Catholic Church.

Legislative update from the capital

The following is a status update as of presstime on Feb. 12 on proposals at the statehouse that are of interest to the Iowa Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the Catholic Church in Iowa.

A flurry of activity is expected at the state Capitol as the first "funnel" deadline hits. Bills must pass their first committee by Friday, Feb. 16 in order to receive further consideration. It's a way for legislators to manage their workload.

The deadline does not apply to budget or tax-related bills. Some failed bills are also brought back as amendments.

The Iowa Catholic Conference, the public policy arm of the Catholic Church in Iowa, still has several issues in play.

Immigration

The ICC opposes SF 2211, a bill to create a state crime of illegal entry into the state by an alien. The bill passed a subcommittee last week and is eligible for consideration by the full Senate Judiciary Committee.

Aside from the fact that any state immigration policy is pre-empted by the U.S. Constitution and federal law, we believe it is problematic that SF 2211 would allow for the prosecution of an individual for state immigration crimes even if that person's application for immigration relief is pending before federal authorities.

So far the "smuggling of persons" bill, HF 2112, has not been debated by the House Judiciary Committee. The Church does not encourage illegal immigration but is concerned the bill as drafted could be interpreted

by some people to criminalize providing basic charity to immigrants.

Death penalty

A bill to bring back the death penalty, SSB 3085, could still be voted on by the Senate Judiciary Committee as well.

While the death penalty is popular in some circles, the Church teaches in the Catechism that "the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person, and she works with determination for its abolition worldwide."

Pro-life

The ICC is asking the House Judiciary Committee to pass HSB 621, a bill providing that an unborn person would be protected by Iowa criminal laws prohibiting murder, manslaughter, negligent homicide, etc. Any actions by the pregnant women are excluded from the bill. Forty other states already have these protections for unborn children.

Ghost guns

There's a subcommittee meeting scheduled Feb. 13 for HF 488, regarding so-called "ghost guns." The ICC supports the bill, which requires firearms parts that can be assembled to have a serial number. Iowa law does not regulate them, because this type of technology did not exist until recently. They are apparently gaining in popularity for the mere fact that they are untraceable.

Religious freedom

The House Judiciary Committee has passed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act bill.

HSB 614 creates a "compelling interest test" in cases where religious exercise is burdened by government action. Government should be held to a high level of proof before it interferes with someone's free exercise of religion. A Senate committee has also passed a religious freedom bill.



Tom Chapman

Iowa MOMs program

Two bills supported by the ICC passed the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. SF 2252 is the fix for the Iowa MOMS (More Options for Maternal Support) program, and SF 2251 would require that mothers with Medicaid coverage would receive care for a full year after the birth of their child.

Currently mothers have coverage for 60 days after the birth.

The bill scales back the eligibility for mothers on Medicaid from 375% of the federal poverty level (the best in the country) to 215%. We are working to keep the existing eligibility rate. The House version, HSB 643, passed a subcommittee.

SF 2286, the "Med Act" medical conscience bill, passed the Senate Judiciary Committee. This bill provides needed conscience protections for medical personnel.

Tom Chapman is the executive director of the Iowa Catholic Conference.

Catholic schools at the Capitol for legislative day



Representatives of Holy Family, St. Joseph, and Holy Trinity Catholic schools were at the state Capitol recently for a legislative day.

May two deacons who recently died rest in peace

Deacon James Doyle died Dec. 22 at the age of 80.

He was ordained Oct. 8, 1983 with the sixth formation community. Deacon Doyle, of Granger, served St. Mary of Nazareth Parish in Des Moines. He retired in 1997. A Mass was celebrated for him at Assumption Church in Granger on Feb. 4.

Deacon Marvin Klein, of St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap, died Feb. 11 at the age of 88.

Ordained a deacon in 1974, Deacon Klein was a farmer who proclaimed the Gospel during the historic 1979 Mass celebrated in Iowa by St. John Paul II. He served St. Patrick Parish in Dunlap and Sacred Heart Parish in Woodbine. Plans for his funeral Mass were pending at presstime.

CARING ABOUT YOUR LOSS AND SHARING IN YOUR FAITH

Prayer to St. Joseph for a Happy Death

O blessed Joseph who died in the arms of Jesus and Mary, obtain for me, I beseech you, the grace of a happy death.

In that hour of dread and anguish, assist me by your presence, and protect me by your power against the enemies of your salvation.

Into your sacred hands, living and dying, Jesus, Mary, Joseph, I commend my soul.

Amen

John & Mark Parrish, parishioners of St. Francis of Assisi

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How to raise pro-life children

Guest Column



By Maggie DeWitte

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law” (No. 2271).

So, do American Catholics embrace Church teachings on sanctity of life issues as expressed in the Catechism?

Sadly, no.

In a 2022 poll by The Associated Press and NORC Center for Public Affairs Research (based at the University of Chicago) only 36% of Catholics said abortion should be illegal in most or all cases. By contrast, 68% of weekly Mass attendees and 71% of Protestant evangelicals thought abortion should be illegal in most or all cases.

Many reading this, perhaps even you,

take a nuanced position, that although you are personally against abortion, you can't impose your view on others. Since the 1973 Roe v Wade decision by the U.S. Supreme Court, 65 million babies have been aborted.

What do we do about this?

Pulse Life Advocates (formerly known as Iowans for LIFE) launched a new 4-part series, “How to Raise Pro-Life Children,” to answer the question.

Each episode is concise and clear, ranging from 10 to 15 minutes.

Pulse interviewed moms, dads, and teens around the state asking two questions:

- How are you raising pro-life children?
- How did your parents raise you to be pro-life?

Clearly, weekly church attendance is a starting point. Our series builds on this.

You'll relate to all the responses, because these moms and dads took different paths. There is not a single way to raise pro-life children.

But there are consistent approaches that often overlapped.

We included additional insights from three highly regarded religious and cultural sages, including the late Msgr. Frank Chiodo, in one of his last projects before his death; Catholic radio talk-show host, Dr. Ray Guarendi; and Bill Donaghy of the Theology of the Body Institute.

Abortion disrupts and inhibits family life. Its promoters proclaim abortion to be healthcare. And yet it kills the unborn, ravages women's bodies, and wounds their souls. There is nothing healthy about abortion.

Why do we permit it?

Pulse Life Advocate's new series, “How to Raise Pro-Life Children,” provides you with a pathway to avoid the future pain and suffering that awaits your children and grandchildren if they succumb to the lies of abortion.

You can view the series at PulseForLife.org. Go to the drop-down menu, “What we do,” and select “projects,” where you'll see this project displayed.

Maggie DeWitte is the executive director of Pulse Life Advocates.

What's the role of candles in the Church?



I've Been Wondering...

Father John Ludwig

Q. I've always wondered what the role of candles might be in the life of the Church. We see candles on the altar, at the ambo, in processions, in front of statues, etc. Pardon the pun, but could you shed some light on this for me?

A. IT'S TRUE, WE SEE LOTS of candles in churches. In past centuries, long before electricity, candles served the practical need for light. Candles offer a celebratory appearance to the liturgy. Even in our homes, we often will use candles to enhance a special dinner or other occasion. For Christians, candles can be a symbol of divine light and holiness. The Paschal Candle is prominently featured in the Liturgy of the Easter Vigil. The candle is carried into a darkened church, and three times the dea-

con intones: “Light of Christ” to which the congregation responds, “Thanks be to God.” Then the deacon sings the Easter Proclamation. Candles of the faithful are lighted throughout the proclamation. Then the Liturgy of the Word follows.

Many churches offer votive candles for parishioners to light. The votive candles continue to burn long after the person who is praying has left the area. The light of the candle endures, symbolically extending the prayer.

Q. When Jesus walks past him, John the Baptist tells his disciples “Behold the Lamb of God.” And at Mass we pray, “Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world.” Why do we refer to Jesus as the Lamb of God?

A. THERE IS A LOT OF SYMBOLIC language in the liturgy. The reference to the Lamb of God recalls the Exodus when the children of Israel sacrificed the Passover lamb, and splashed the blood of the lamb on their doorposts and joined together for the ritual meal. The story is told in the twelfth chapter of the book of Exodus. This story is read each year at the Holy Thursday liturgy. For Christians, Jesus, who sacrificed his life on the cross, is linked to the salvation that the Israelites experienced when the Angel of Death passed over the homes of those with the lamb's blood on their doorposts. We too experience salvation when we receive the Body and Blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

Q. I've been wondering why if Jesus sits at the right hand of the Father, who sits at the left?

A. WELL, PROBABLY NO ONE! Again, we are dealing with symbolic language – what's the deeper meaning? In the Nicene Creed which we profess every Sunday, we

hear the words, “he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.” This indicates the closeness of the Father and the Son. Throughout the gospels Jesus speaks of and prays about the bond between Father and Son. “Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.” Sitting at the side of someone important becomes a position of honor, glory, and authority. This is why James, John, and their mother (in Matthew 22:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45) asked for her sons to sit the right and the left of Jesus. Even in our culture, we speak about someone being “a right-hand man” to a leader. When we speak of Jesus being seated, again symbolically, at the right hand of the Father we affirm that unbreakable bond. Jesus is true God and true man.

Father John Ludwig is a retired priest of the Diocese of Des Moines. Send questions to him at communications@dmdiocese.org or The Catholic Mirror, Diocese of Des Moines, 601 Grand Ave., Des Moines, IA 50309.

Finding Jesus beyond the crib: A Lenten journey with the least of these

The preferential option for the poor and vulnerable is one of seven Catholic Social Teaching themes that can offer a profound lens through which to view our Lenten practices.

This theme challenges us to recognize Christ's presence among the most marginalized and suffering in our society, calling us to transform almsgiving into a tangible expression of fraternal charity.

St. Matthew's Gospel is clear, “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.” (Mt. 25:40).

Here, Christ identifies himself with the poor and vulnerable, making explicit that in serving them, we serve Christ himself.

Archbishop Oscar Romero, a voice for the voiceless in El Salvador, reminds us of Jesus' lesson, “We must not seek

Guest Column



By John Huynh

the child Jesus in the pretty figures of our Christmas cribs. We must seek him among the undernourished children who have gone to bed tonight with nothing to eat, among the poor newsboys who will sleep covered with newspapers in doorways.”

The archbishop's words powerfully remind us that our faith should not be neatly compartmentalized into comfortable, internalized segments.

Instead, it is a call to action: a tangible, lived response to Jesus' summons to

seek and serve him in the most challenging places.

Lent calls us to pray, fast, and give alms. Let us contemplate how we can employ these practices to make real the preferential option for the poor and vulnerable.

The most apparent of the three, almsgiving, provides a direct avenue to put our faith into action.

Through our giving, we acknowledge our shared humanity in the image of God and the inherent dignity of every person, especially those in dire need.

If you are looking for ideas to pursue a grace-filled and fruitful Lenten almsgiving, consider the following:

- Contact your parish and ask for available opportunities. Some parishes take on programs like CRS Rice Bowl; Mary's Meals; Mary's Helping Hands; Catholic Campaign for Human Develop-

ment; Project Rachel; Walking with Moms In Need, and so forth.

- Volunteer at any one of these diocesan Catholic Charities programs: Emergency Family Shelter; Food Pantry; Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault Program; and Refugee Services. More information can be found at catholiccharitiesdm.org/

- Find a local soup kitchen or food pantry and give your time, treasure, and/or talent.

Let this Lent be a time when we truly seek and serve Christ in every person, especially the least among us, and thereby deliver the Gospel to a world starving for good news!

John Huynh is the coordinator of Social Justice for the Diocese of Des Moines. He can be reached at jhuynh@dmdiocese.org.

Cold water, warm heart: How to feel alive

One after another, influencers are taking the plunge. The cold-water plunge.

I couldn't help but follow along when Elizabeth Ries, a lovable TV personality from Minneapolis, joined the trend this week, heading to Duluth, Minnesota, to dip into Lake Superior. It was zero degrees, and the mother of three was multi-tasking: filming for TV while sharing the experience on Instagram stories.

"This is the true Duluth experience," says Elizabeth, donning a knit cap and plaid jacket, her dimples flashing. "Let's do this!"

Next you see Elizabeth in her black-and-white gingham swimsuit, perched in a sauna floating over Lake Superior. Then she climbs down a ladder and immerses in the hole in the ice, dunking her head underwater. She pops back up, yelps and high fives the man across from her.

"This was the best!" she concludes, back in her jacket and hat. "The best! I can't even stand it."

The Nordic tradition sweeping the country is called "vinterbadning" by the Danish, which means "winter bathing." The Vikings, renowned for their resilience, often followed a sauna session by a plunge into icy waters to boost their "livskraft," or life force. Now suburban moms are following suit.

Brother Matt Wooters, 36, vocations promoter for the Jesuits' Midwest province, understands their motivation. He's turned cold-water swimming into a sunrise ritual, logging nearly 30 different bodies of water in 2023. When he relocated to Detroit last summer, he scouted out a new swim spot before unpacking. He landed on Belle Isle, an island in the Detroit River, and enjoyed a long run of daily swims until the recent

Twenty Something

By Christina
Capecchi



subzero snap forced him to pause.

"If it's in the low 20s, I'll still go," he said.

On the coldest days, he swims about 3 minutes, steadily increasing that length as the weather warms.

"I go in really slow – ankles, knees, hips, chest, then all the way up," he said. "Your first response is to clench and hyperventilate. But you can re-set your nervous system. Then you feel bliss. Your brain is flooded with happy chemicals. It happens every time."

He's not surprised so many Americans – numbed by non-stop exposure to screens – are taking the plunge. "There's something to having a thrill. And there's a certain playfulness to it. We're going swimming – we're not working on a spreadsheet. We're doing cannon balls!"

His daily swim keeps him attuned to the shifting of seasons, which feels "liturgical." It reminds him of how monks adjust the time of their morning and evening prayer to the daylight. "We're connected to water and air and seasons, even though we're quite air-conditioned and heated and comfortable these days."

Though high-profile influencers may not articulate it, there's a spiritual underpinning to a cold-water plunge. "There's a seeking," Brother Matt said. "And there's a finding. They've had an



Brother Matt Wooters, 36, vocations promoter for the Jesuits' Midwest province, says there's a spiritual underpinning to a cold-water swim.

experience with something wonderful and wild and mysterious, and they go back to it. Almost always, we're trying to fill a God-shaped hole in our heart. We crave to live with God forever. I'm hungry for that, I want more of that."

The joy of cold-water immersion is a guidepost, he believes, calling to mind a statement from St. Ignatius: that which makes you feel most alive, that's where God is.

"There's an alignment with our God-given gifts and talents, and also a sense of God's closeness," Brother Matt said. "Consolation fills us with an increase of

faith, hope and love. St. Ignatius tells us to go back to those moments."

He finds them, invariably, while swimming.

"It's baptismal," he said. "How you go into the baptismal font is different from how you leave. Not only are you physically wet, but you're drenched in grace. I feel the same. And whatever worries or fears you had going into it are gone when you're done."

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Inver Grove Heights, Minn.

The dark night as impasse

What happens to us when we experience a dark night of the soul? What's happening and what's to be our response?

There are libraries of literature on this, each book or article making its own point, but here I want to share a rather unique and highly insightful take on this by Constance FitzGerald, a Carmelite nun and someone well versed in the various classical spiritual writers who speak about the dark night of the soul.

She uses the word "impasse" to render what is commonly called a dark night of the soul. For her, in effect, what happens in a dark night of the soul is that you come to an "impasse" in your life in terms of your emotions, your intellect, and your imagination. All the former ways you understood, imagined, and felt about things, especially as this relates to God, faith, and prayer, no longer work for you. You are, so to speak, paralyzed, unable to go back to the way things were and unable to move forwards. And part of the paralysis is that you cannot think, imagine, or feel your way out of this. You are at an impasse – no way back and no way forward. So, what do you do? How do you move beyond the impasse?

There's no simple or quick path out of this. You cannot imagine, think, or feel your way out of this because the vision, symbols, answers, and feelings you need, in effect, don't exist yet, at least they don't



By Father Ron
Rolheiser

exist for you. That's the exact reason why you are at an impasse and so emotionally and intellectually paralyzed. The new vision and feelings that can reset your vision, thoughts, and feelings first have to be gestated and given birth to through your own pain and confusion.

At this stage, there is no answer, at least not for you. You may have read accounts of others who have undergone the same impasse and who now offer counsel as to how to undergo the dark night. That can be useful, but it's still your heart, your imagination, and your intellect that are in the crucible of fire. Knowing that others have gone through the same fire can help give you vision and consolation in your paralysis, but the fire must still be gone through in your own life to reset your own imagination, thoughts, and feelings.

For FitzGerald, being in this state is the ultimate liminal space within which we can find ourselves. This is a crucible within which we are being purified. And, for her, the way out is the way through. The way out of a dark night of this kind is through "contemplation", namely, staying with the

impasse, waiting patiently inside it, and waiting for God to break the impasse by transforming our imagination, intellect, and heart.

So ultimately, this impasse is a challenge for us to become mystics, not that we begin to search for extraordinary religious experience, but that we let our disillusion, broken symbols, and failed meanings become the space wherein God can reset our faith, feelings, imagination, and intellect inside of a new horizon wherein everything is radically reinterpreted.

How do we do this concretely? How do we contemplate? We do it by sitting in the tension, helpless, patient, open, waiting, and staying there however long it takes for us to receive in the depth of our souls a new way of imagining, thinking, and feeling about God, faith, and prayer - beyond the impasse.

Moreover, the broken symbols, the disillusion, and our helplessness to think or feel our way out of the impasse is precisely what assures us that the new vision which is given to us comes from God and is not the product of own imagination or projection or self-interest.

One of the most penetrating criticisms of religious experience ever given was made by Friedrich Nietzsche who claimed that all religious experience, all of it, is ultimately human projection. He argued that we create God in our self-im-

age and likeness for our own self-interest, and that is why a lot of sincere faith and religion can be hypocritical and false. Reacting to this, Michael Buckley, the renowned Jesuit philosopher, and theologian, made this counterclaim: Nietzsche is 95% correct. Ninety-five percent of what claims to be religious experience is in fact human projection. But, Buckley adds, Nietzsche is 5% wrong and that 5% makes all the difference - because in that 5% God's revelation flows untainted in our lives.

Now, and this is the essential point here, that 5% happens precisely when we are in a dark night of the soul, when our symbols are broken, our intellect is impotent, our imagination is empty, and our hearts are at loss. It is precisely then, when we are helpless to help ourselves that we are also helpless to fudge and taint the way God is entering us.

God can flow into our lives pure and untainted when we are at an impasse and unable to substitute our vision for God's vision.

Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author. He can be contacted through his website ronrolheiser.com.

First female saint from Argentina is canonized



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis leaves in a wheelchair after the Mass for the canonization of St. Maria Antonia de Paz Figueroa, known as Mama Antula, in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Feb. 11. She is the first female saint from Argentina.

Pope: Protecting the environment is part of protecting human life

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- The obligation to care for creation is not only about the environment, "it has to do with human life, as the Creator conceived and arranged it," Pope Francis told a group from northern Italy dedicated to remembering the 1,910 people who died from the Vajont dam disaster.

"One thing is striking," the pope said; "it was not mistakes in

the design or construction of the dam that caused the tragedy, but the very fact of wanting to build a reservoir in the wrong place."

In October 1963 a landslide on an unstable mountain on the southern side of the reservoir set off a massive tsunami, wiping out entire towns and villages and killing 1,910 people.

The dam, built to generate power, remained intact.

The decision to build and use the dam, despite cautionary studies about its surroundings, put "the logic of profit before the care of people and the environment in which they live," the pope said during a meeting Jan. 19 with pilgrims from the Diocese of Belluno-Feltre and from the association "Vajont: The Future of Memory."

Clima de Conversión en Cuaresma

Continued from page 2

la petición de su hijo.

Surge la tragedia. Cuando un vecino sobresaltado llega con Krzyztof a darle la terrible noticia que su hijo ha muerto luego de haber caído en el hielo, el padre permanece calmado, respondiendo "no puede ser," ya que sus cálculos habían determinado que eso no podía suceder. Cuando eventualmente el desesperado padre regresa a su computadora, como siempre, la pantalla está parpadeando, lista para que la activen con las palabras, "Estoy listo."

En el Segundo Libro de Samuel 24: 2, 9-17, el Rey David no tiene una computadora a la mano. Pero quiere saber cuántos soldados tiene por lo que llama una toma de lista. Los números son impresionantes: un total de 1.3 millones de hombres. Israel ya no es la nación más débil de la cuadra. Pero la conciencia de David es traicionada por su necesidad. Al contar su poderío militar, en vez de ver una humilde dependencia en Dios quien le ha guiado en su vida hasta este punto, él viola efectivamente el Primer Mandamiento: "No tendrás otros dioses delante de mí" – especialmente a sí mismo, oh insignificante siervo David. Entre su elección de entre varios castigos expresa su deseo de restaurar inmediatamente su conexión y su dependencia con Dios – ante quien él se postra en contrición y en súplica para sí mismo y para su pueblo. Aún así, miles de inocentes sufren.

Al comenzar nosotros nuestro peregrinar de Cuaresma, mi oración es que para cada uno de nosotros sea más un tiempo de conversión en vez de un tiempo de cálculos. No ignoramos los números que se mueven a nuestro alrededor en el mundo, especialmente aquellos que nos hablan de tragedias, de pérdidas humanas y de sufrimiento. De hecho, estamos llamados a enfocar nuestra atención a las señales de los tiempos que nos rodean, con una apertura y convencimiento de que nuestros caminos no son los caminos de Dios. Como individuos y como naciones, tenemos la tendencia a revertir a una dependencia en nuestro propio poder en vez de humillarnos nosotros mismos ante el Señor, ante quien confiamos cada vez más porque su misericordia extiende su juicio claro y poderoso de nuestros propios corazones.

Estamos llamados a no llevar la cuenta de nuestros propios sacrificios y compromisos para nuestra autovalidación bajo la tonada de: "He mantenido mis compromisos por 23 días y voy por 40, he asistido a Misa casi todos esos días; he orado un número similar de Rosarios y he llenado mi Tazón de Arroz para Catholic Relief Services con todo el dinero que ahorré con mi ayuno de dulces y de alcohol."

Todos estos son actos valiosos por sí mismos, pero no nos llevan necesariamente a entregarnos a nosotros mismos a una dependencia radical bajo la gracia salvadora de Dios. No nos llevan tampoco a ver más allá de nosotros mismos para enfrentar a un mundo que está girando muy lejos del compromiso bíblico y de alianza de Dios con el pueblo de Israel. Dios eligió a Israel para que fuera el heraldo de su plan de poner su poder salvador a nuestra disposición, para que pudiéramos regresar a él en arrepentimiento y en reconciliación.

El Medio Oriente es ciertamente un ambiente hostil e inhumano. Nuestra disciplina de

Cuaresma debe llevarnos no solamente a una conversión personal, sino a una ferviente oración y dedicación política para que no prevalezca el statu quo de guerra como de costumbre.

En su declaración de enero a los diplomáticos de varios países ante el Vaticano, reunidos en la Santa Sede, el Papa Francisco advirtió: "Todos seguimos sorprendidos por el ataque del 7 de octubre contra el pueblo de Israel en el cual un gran número de personas inocentes fueron terriblemente heridas, torturadas y asesinadas, así como varias fueron tomadas como rehenes. Renuevo mi condena contra este acto y cada instancia de terrorismo y de extremismo. Esta no es la forma de resolver disputas entre los pueblos; esas disputas solamente se agravan y causan sufrimiento a todos."

El Santo Padre continua, "Precisamente, el ataque provocó una fuerte respuesta militar de Israel en Gaza que ha llevado a la muerte de decenas de miles de palestinos, principalmente civiles, incluyendo muchos jóvenes y niños, y ha causado una crisis humanitaria excepcionalmente grave y un sufrimiento inconcebible."

El Papa suplica que hospitales, escuelas y sitios de culto (incluyendo aquellos para los 2,500 cristianos que permanecen en Palestina) reciban toda la protección necesaria que pudiera lograr un alto al fuego en todos los frentes.

Así como el Rey David se dio cuenta, no estamos llamados a vivir solamente de los números; pero no por eso podemos olvidarlos completamente en nuestro llamado de Cuaresma a comprometernos y permitir que nuestros corazones – tal vez endurecidos por las atrocidades de la guerra – se derritan ante los hechos que tenemos en frente: fuentes confiables reportan que en Gaza más de 10,000 niños de los 1.1 millones de niños que habitan en Gaza – el 1% de la población total – han muerto desde el ataque a Israel el 7 de octubre y en el asalto a Gaza que le ha seguido. El sitio de web "Salvemos a los Niños" ("Save the Children" por su nombre en inglés) reporta, "Aproximadamente 1,000 niños en Gaza han perdido una o ambas piernas, muchas de las cuales se les han amputado sin uso de anestésicos, y van a necesitar asistencia médica de por vida." Estos crímenes solamente complican más con los secuestros de niños en Israel y los 33 niños israelíes asesinados en el ataque inicial y sus secuelas.

Nunca veremos la paz en esos términos. Al igual que el Rey David, debemos recuperar nuestros sentidos, para que no mueran más víctimas inocentes a consecuencia de la necesidad de líderes políticos. Las personas de fe y de buena voluntad deben poner en práctica sus oraciones y elevar nuestras voces para proclamar, "No más guerra en estos términos. Detengan la masacre de niños y de víctimas inocentes."

Hay personas malignas allá fuera. Pero esto no debe promover que alguien responda de una forma en que imita sus métodos. Porque entonces todas nuestras labores y sacrificios de Cuaresma serían en vano. Entonces el clima global se mantendría así de extremo, como consecuencia de corazones humanos que se mantienen inamovibles. En vez de esto, con corazones humildes y rotos, declaramos al Dios viviente que reclama nuestras alabanzas y todas nuestras decisiones y clemencias: "Estoy listo... para la vida de Resurrección."



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Holy Father proclaims 2024 Year of Prayer

Continued from page 1

“prepared for and lived in individual communities with that spirit of expectation which is typical of Christian hope,” he said, unveiling several resources the dicastery is providing to help bishops, dioceses, parishes, families and religious communities rediscover the value of and need for daily prayer.

Unlike other years designated by the pope, “this is not a year marked with particular initiatives,” Archbishop Fisichella said. Rather it is a time to get back to basics: to discover how to pray and how to educate people in prayer “so that prayer can be effective and fruitful.”

“It will not be a year which hinders initiatives of the local churches; rather it should be seen as a period in which every planned initiative is supported effectively, precisely because it has prayer as its foundation,” he said.

When asked how the year can complement the U.S. bishops’ National Eucharistic Revival underway, Msgr. Graham Bell, undersecretary of the dicastery’s section for new evangelization, told Catholic News Service, “We are well pleased that the American bishops want to call attention to what Vatican II calls the source and summit of Christian life because it must be the foundation of every renewal.”

Therefore, the revival initiative “is very appropriate in view of the 2025 jubilee,” he said.

The dicastery will release ideas, suggestions and resources as the year continues, starting with an eight-volume series of booklets titled, “Notes on Prayer,” that “delve into the various dimensions of the Christian act of praying, signed by authors of international renown,” Msgr. Bell said at the news conference.

As the translations are done, the series will be made available to the world’s bishops’ conferences, the archbishop said.

The first volume, titled “Praying Today. A Challenge to Be Overcome,” was released Jan. 23 and was written by Cardinal Angelo Comastri, retired arch-

priest of St. Peter’s Basilica, with a preface by Pope Francis.

“Prayer is the breath of faith, it is its most proper expression. Like a silent cry that comes forth from the heart of those who believe and entrust themselves to God,” the pope wrote.

The other texts, to be released over the next three months, will carry titles such as “Praying with the Psalms,” “The Prayer of Jesus,” “Praying with Saints and Sinners,” and “The Prayer Jesus Taught Us: The ‘Our Father.’”

The dicastery also will send out texts and guides digitally for dioceses to integrate, modify and distribute as they see fit, Archbishop Fisichella said. The different texts will cover many possible aspects of a Christian’s prayer life, including spiritual retreats, shrines and the priesthood.

In addition, he noted, Pope Francis’ 38 general audience talks on prayer, given from May 6, 2020, to June 16, 2021, are available online, reflect on the various forms of prayer and contain many useful suggestions.

Pope Francis will set up a “school of prayer” for 2024, he said. It will be similar to the pope’s “Fridays of Mercy” initiative during the extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy in 2016, when he visited people on the “peripheries,” including babies in a neonatal unit, a center for the blind and a housing project.

“This will be a series of moments of encounter with specific groups of people to pray together and better understand the various forms of prayer: from thanksgiving to intercession; from contemplative prayer to the prayer of consolation; from adoration to supplication,” the archbishop said.

There is “a profound need for spirituality,” he said. And the Year of Prayer is meant to be “a way of fostering the relationship with the Lord, offering moments of genuine spiritual rest.”

“It is like an oasis sheltered from daily stress where prayer becomes nourishment for the Christian life of faith, hope and charity,” the archbishop said.



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis gives candy to a child as he greets members of Confartigianato Imprese, an Italian confederation of artisans and small businesses, in the Paul VI Audience Hall at the Vatican Feb. 10.

Pope: Proper use of AI requires human wisdom, human heart

VATICAN CITY (CNS) -- While artificial intelligence can be a formidable tool to facilitate communication and exchange information, it cannot provide the uniquely human wisdom needed to promote the good of people and their communities,

Pope Francis said. “No doubt, machines possess a limitlessly greater capacity than human beings for storing and correlating data, but human beings alone are capable of making sense of that data,” the pope wrote in his message for World Communications Day, which will be celebrated May 12.

Using artificial intelligence for the good of humanity is “not simply a matter of making machines appear more human, but of awakening humanity from the slumber induced by the illusion of omnipotence, based on the belief that we are completely autonomous and self-referential subjects, detached from all social bonds and forgetful of our status as creatures,” the pope said.

The theme for the 2024 world day is “Artificial Intelligence and the Wisdom of the Heart: Toward a Fully Human Communication.” Pope Francis also dedicated his message for the church’s celebration of World Day of Peace Jan. 1 to “Artificial Intelligence and Peace.”

The pope’s message was released Jan. 24, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists.

New Jersey priest’s devotion to saint helps bring her life to the big screen

HOBOKEN, N.J. (OSV News) -- For the last decade, Msgr. Paul Bochicchio of St. Francis Church in Hoboken has been advising as a spiritual consultant on the upcoming film “Cabrini,” produced by Angel Studios about the life and ministry of St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, set to debut in theaters in March 8.

The movie, from the studio that produced “The Chosen” and “Sound of Freedom,” gives a dramatic look into the life of Mother Cabrini, as she is best known, and the uphill battle she faced ministering to the immigrant poor of New York.

Msgr. Bochicchio, a priest of 52 years, has had a lifelong devotion to the first American saint. His great-grandmother knew Mother Cabrini personally, as they were both community leaders among New York Italian immigrants at the turn of the 20th century.

Noting his grandmother had an enormous influence on his vocation to the priesthood, he found that he had a calling to work with Italian immigrants due to his background and had the perfect model in the patron saint of immigrants. As one of many technical advisers on the set of “Cabrini” but also as a Catholic priest, Msgr. Bochicchio accompanied the cast and crew on work retreats, where he would celebrate Mass every day and give spiritual reflections on the saint. As a script adviser, he would receive every revision and be asked to comment on its accuracy.



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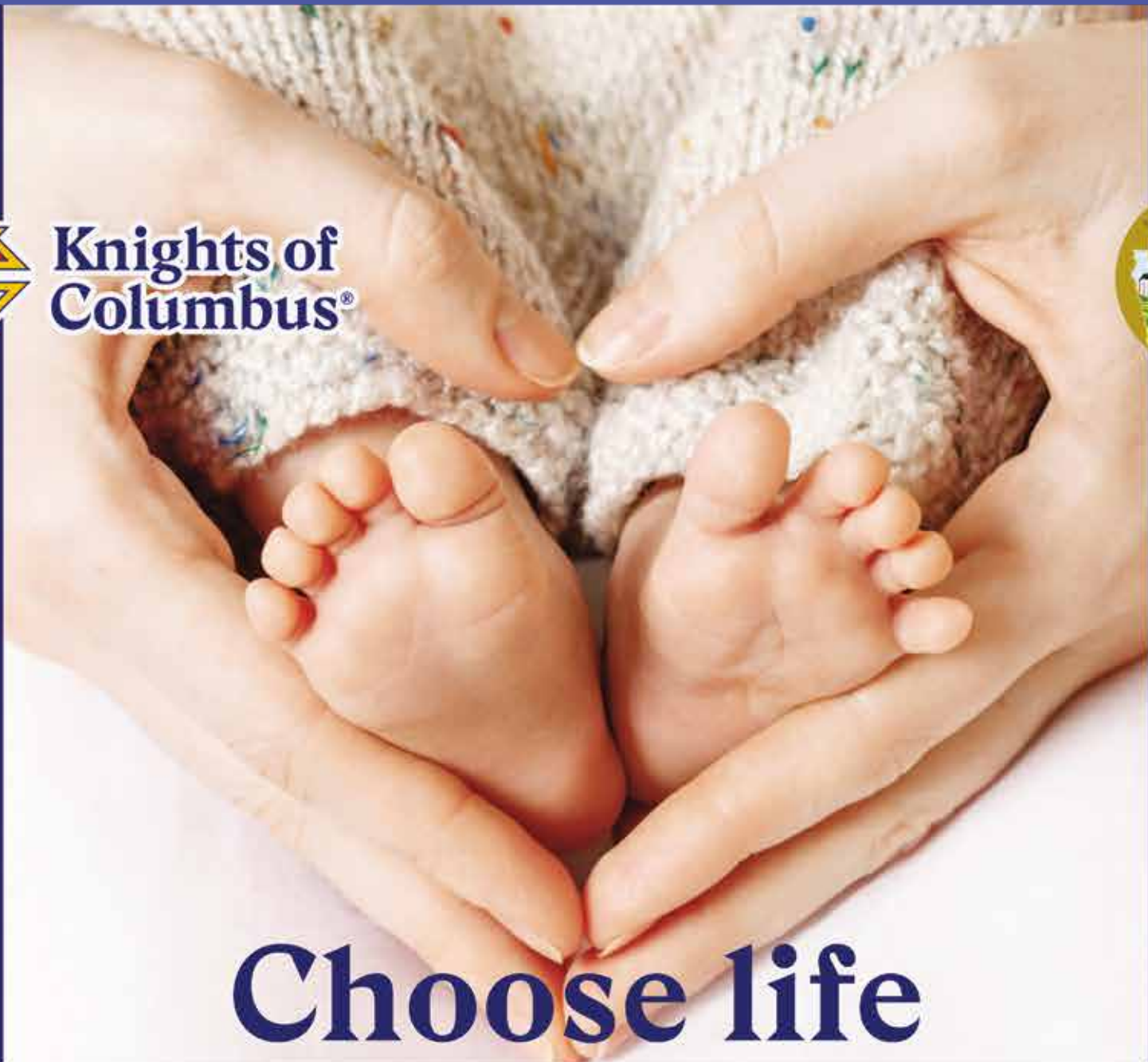
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